



COMMUNITY RADIO FOR EFFECTIVE HEALTH COMMUNICATION IN MANIPUR

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically analyzes the significant need of community radio for effective health communication in Manipur. Community Radio (CR) plays a vibrant role in preserving communities alive. It is a very powerful tool in mobilizing community action by informing and empowering the community people. It gives voice to the marginalized sections of the society by facilitating people with opportunities to express their needs to local government and even the national government. Radio, which is easily accessible even in the remotest area and can reach people of every walk of life, may be used as an effective tool for effective health communication in Manipur where accessibility of healthcare services is rather difficult as majority of the government health care centres are not properly functioning due to lack of manpower or infrastructure; and proper facilities of transportation and communication. Manipur, even though small state it is, is the land of diverse cultures and multiples dialects. Hence, community radio, which is perfectly need-base of the community following its culture and dialect, can be effectively used to deliver health information to masses thereby increasing health awareness of the public. For this study, both primary (interviews) and secondary data are used.

KEYWORDS: Community radio, Diversity, Healthy, Health awareness and Health communication.

INTRODUCTION

Community radio is the radio run by community for the community in local language with the programs focusing on the issues related to community. The sole philosophy of community radio is to give the voice to the voiceless, the mouth-piece to oppressed people irrespective of gender or caste or class groups, generally a tool for development (AMARC Africa and Panos Southern Africa, 1998). Community radio should have three primary aspects, namely: non-profit making, community ownership and control, community participation. "Community radio is not about doing something for the community but about the community doing something for itself, i.e. owning and controlling its own means of communication" (AMARC Africa and Panos Southern Africa, 1998).

Community radio stations can play a pivotal role in increasing and promoting active participation of the poor deprived rural communities. It can play paramount role in sharing opinions, improving and diversifying knowledge and skills of the marginalized and deprived communities of the society. Community radio stations serve in catering health and cultural needs of the marginalized and the poor deprived rural communities (Pavarala et al, 2007; Islam, 2002; Ambekar, 2004; Kumar, 2003).

Health communication is defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as: "*The study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health.*"

According to WHO Constitution 1948, health is defined as: "*A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.*"

To improve the quality of life and standard of living of the society, it is highly needed to increase the health awareness of the public. Healthy citizens are essential for the development of the nation. Good health is the important factor of human happiness and well being in which health information is an indispensable tool for achieving the goal by empowering people with the proper information of health. In every aspect of life, information is very much needed to produce socially, economically and politically change. Information is very valuable services that can changes mind and behavior of the individuals thereby bringing change in the society. Information is delivered to public through various medium of which radio is very popular and common one. Radio particularly in remote and rural area plays a great role in communication that connects the individuals.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The present era of cable channels, open skies, liberalization, privatization and globalization not only threatens the cottage and small scale industries, local jobs and employment pattern in India but also promote cultural imperialism (Dhanraj, 2010). It also threatens the identity and culture of small community. Now-a day, media have been commercialized as most of the media houses are controlled by powerful commercial lobby groups. They enforce many rules and regulations

based on international media laws and regulations that serve only their interests and thereby making difficult for the poor and the marginalized sections to access and active participation of media activities (Dhanraj, 2010). Community radio helps in developing community cohesion and solidarity. Community involvement is very much necessary to bring the development as a whole nation (Silvia, 1999).

In India, the wave of community radio which is the promising channel to empower the people came late. The Supreme Court's historic ruling on 9.2.1995: 'Airwaves constitute public property and must be utilized for advancing public good..... Airwaves, being public property, it is the duty of the State to see that airwaves are so utilized as to advance the free speech right of the citizens which is served by ensuring plurality and diversity of views, opinions and ideas' give birth a new era of broadcasting in India (Bandyopadhyay, 2007). It strengthens the demand of third tier of broadcasting in India. In the very beginning, only educational institutions are permitted to set up campus community radio stations covering a transmission range of 10-15 km (Aditeshwar, n.d.).

Anna FM which was India's first campus community radio station was launched on February 1, 2004, at Anna University. It is maintained by the Educational Multimedia Research Centre (EMRC) and all the programs are produced by Media Science Students at Anna University.

In North Eastern Region of India, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University launched the first community radio on 28th of January, 2009 at 90.4 MHz with an experimental broadcasting from Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati, to provide education beyond barriers to reach the unreached of the society. The regular broadcasting of Jnan Taranga, the KKHSOU Community Radio was launched on 20th of November, 2010. The second community radio of the region, 'Radio Luit' of Gauhati University was also started on 1st March, 2011 (Ankuran . D, & Anamika R, n.d.).

METHODOLOGY

This research study is based on both primary and secondary data. For primary data, interviews are followed. Interviews of a pioneer of community radio movement in Manipur and founder of a community radio station in Manipur; and a regular staff holding the position of Regional News Unit (RNU) Head, AIR, Imphal, are conducted to collect primary data and related information of study area. Researchers analyzed the data available at the official websites of different institutions such as State Health Society, Manipur; Health and Family Welfare, Government of Manipur; Directorate of Health Services, Government of Manipur. Researchers observed the social structure and economic condition of Manipur that are directly or indirectly linked to study area. The data collected from reputed journals, papers and related websites are also used for this study.

Demographic and Social Structure of Manipur

Manipur is a land of diversity with 34 listed scheduled tribes apart from the

Meities, Meitei Pangals and 7 scheduled castes along with their separate dialects and cultures (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2016; Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2015). Manipur is one of the extreme bordered States of North East India. The state shares borders with Nagaland to the north, Assam to the west, Mizoram to the southwest and Myanmar to the south and east (Indian Brand Equity Foundation, 2016). Imphal is the capital of Manipur. Manipur has total geographical area of 22,327 Sq. Km.; the population of Manipur is 2,721,756 with 79.85 percent literacy rate (Registrar General & Census Commission, 2015). The state has 9 districts of which 5 are hilly districts and 4 plain districts (Ministry of Health & Family Welfare).

Brief Profile of Community Radio in Manipur

At Present, All India Radio (AIR) with the total of 415 stations across the country covers nearly 92 percent of the country area and serves 99.19 of the total population (All India Radio, 2016). As on 30th September 2015, there are 243 operational private FM Radio Stations and 187 operational Community Radio Stations in India (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, 2015).

In Manipur, All India Radio station was started commission on 15th August 1963. It covers the programs zone of the entire state. Manipuri is the primary language in which programs are being broadcasted. The programs also broadcast in Hmar, Kabui, Mao, Paite, Tangkhul and Thadou which are the major dialects of the state (All India Radio, 2016).

Dr. Aribam Ibomcha Sharma, News Editor (NE) and Regional News Unit (RNU) Head, AIR, Imphal expresses (Interview with Authors, 2016) that "In Manipur, two full-fledged radio stations namely - All India Radio Imphal and All India Radio (FM service) Churachandpur are operating presently. Ironically, nearly 10 unlicensed radio stations were operating in Manipur 2-3 years back, but, they have to close down for being unauthorized stations. Those persons, operating the stations, were lack of proper knowledge of getting license.....practically speaking, no community radio stations exists in Manipur."

In the words of Dr. Sagolsem Chaoba (Managing Director, Tamna Radio and Secy. of Integrated Community Development Organization, Uchiwa), "Although, Tamna Radio have been operating since 2010, they stopped broadcasting from August, 2015...they are waiting for the Letter of Intent from the authority concerned. They used to broadcast daily programs from 2 p.m till 10 p.m while they broadcasted their programs from 11 am onwards on Sundays.

Brief profile of health services in Manipur

In Manipur, most of the health services under government sector, with a very few private hospitals and nursing homes. The state health department is sub-divided into three levels, namely; First, Primary care level which includes Primary Health Sub-Centre (PHSC), Primary Health Care (PHC), and Community Health centre in which essential basic cares are provided; Second, Secondary care level which includes Community Health Centres and District Hospitals that act as referral centres and in which comparatively better services are provided with basic specialist facilities; Lastly, Tertiary care level which comprises State Level Hospital in which specialist and super specialist care is provided (Directorate of Health Services, 2016).

The demographic indicators in the state of Manipur and target by the end of the 12th plan (2012-2017).

Sl. No.	Item	Current Status	Target by 12 th plan end
1	Infant mortality rate (SRS-11)	11	9
2	Maternal Mortality rate	64-80	60
3	Total fertility rate	1.5	1.5
4	Malnutrition of children (0-3 years)	22	15
5	Anaemia among women (15-49 years)	35	20
6	Sex Ratio (0-6 years)	934	960
7	Crude Birth Rate (SRS-10)	14.4	12
8	Crude Death Rate (SRS-10)	4.1	3.5
9	Sex Ratio (census 2011)	987	995
10	Mothers with full ANC	46.7	80
11	Institutional Delivery	68.3	90
12	Delivery by skilled health personnel	90.3	95
13	Early institution of Breast Feeding	75.1	90
14	Child exclusively breast fed for 6 months	79.2	90
15	Fully immunized children 12-23 months	81.4	90

Source: Directorate of Health Services, Government of Manipur

Number of health institutions in the state along with bed strength.

Sl. No	Category of institution	Number	Sanctioned bed strength	Actual bed in position	General hospital beds
A	Under the state Health department				
1	State General hospital	1	500	376	376
2	State TB Hospital	1	100	100	0
3	State Leprosy Hospital	1	30	6	0
4	Districts Hospital	7	450	295	295
5	Sub district Hospital	1	50	50	50
6	CHC	16	480	344	344
	Sub-total Secondary	0	1610		1065
7	PHC	85	432	370	0
8	PHSC	421	0	0	0
9	Allopathic Dispensary	20	0	0	0
10	AYUSH Dispensary	20	0	0	0
	Total A	563	2042	1541	1065
B	Under the Ministry of GOI				
1	RIMS Hospital	1	1074	1074	1074
C	Under Private Sector				
1	Regd. Hospital and Nursing home	26	807	807	807
	Grand total (A+B+C)	590	3923	3422	2946

Source: Directorate of Health Services, Government of Manipur,

Available at: http://www.manipurhealthdirectorates.in/?page_id=186 (Accessed on: 2016, March 12)

Analytical Study of the Significance of Community Radio for Effective Health Communication in Manipur

Radio is among the most used sources of information by general public. It is the social watchdog and provider of the news on events happening in the society. The mind and behavior of readers are very much influenced by the information that they get from Radio. Imparting health awareness to the masses is one of the fundamental issues in underdeveloped areas like Manipur. Against all odds, health awareness should be given to the people who have long been deprived of such basic information and/or amenities in life through the powerful media – radio, particularly community radio by providing health care information to the people.

Radio is immediate. As the technology is simpler in Radio, News stories and events can be broadcasted more quickly on radio than in Newspapers or on television. It is easily accessible to everyone. Radio can be tuned in wherever you are. You can easily carry a radio to the fields or listen to it even in a car (Pavaral, 2003: 2166). It is also inclusive that can reach most people including the marginalized, the poor and those illiterate who cannot write or read. Radio which is inexpensive medium and comparatively simple technology is more expedient for illiterate and peasant communities and societies in which oral and folk traditions are characterized (Pavaral, Vinod 2003: 2166).

Radio, however the cheapest mass medium it is, is the most powerful medium that can reach large number of people residing in remote area. Radio which is based on oral tradition can be accessed in the remotest area (Silvia, 1999). Radio is the convenient tool for the speedy diffusion of messages on agriculture, health, nutrition, and family planning and other social and cultural issues. It can endorse dialogue and debate on the primary issues of community development as well as provide a platform for the expression of community's needs, opinions and aspirations.

The transport and communication system in the State is still poor. Still there are many parts in the state particularly in remote interior areas that do not have proper connectivity with the rest. In such dreadful geographical gaps, making communities aware of the value of health and hygiene is not that quite simple task. Here, the role of community radio to promote public healthcare is highly needed to consider. Through the channel of community radio, information on health care can be effectively delivered to people. In Manipur, tuning to radio is quite common among people.

Community radio is of great significance in a land-locked state like Manipur where transport and communication facility are poor. Accessibility with its

neighboring states is quite difficult and the intra-state transport system is also very poor. Under these situations, many people have lost their valuable lives due to lack of proper health care services and timely interventions. It is, therefore, quite essential to impart health awareness to the people living every nook and corner of the state to improve their health condition, and moreover, to save lives. In this regard, considering the lack of health care infrastructure and accessibility to health care services, it is vital that community radio can play a significant role in reaching health message to the people thereby imparting them health awareness.

As per Census 2011, Manipur stands at the top of the radio listeners' among the states of India. Dr. Aribam Ibomcha Sharma adds that "there is high chance of viability and sustainability of community radio stations in Manipur. Since the production cost of community radio is comparatively less with community newspapers and community television, it will be easier to set up community radio stations in Manipur. Although, Manipur have poor connectivity and power supply comparatively with the rest of Indian states, it is not in such a bad condition where community radio stations can't sustain..... viability also depends on the persons involved in operating the community radio stations..... In community radio, the content is created by the community themselves. Even, election debate can be broadcasted through community radio without any bias in order to maintain objectivity."

Dr. Sagolsem Chaoba (Managing Director, Tamna Radio and Secy. of Integrated Community Development Organization, Uchiwa), mentions that they broadcasted health programs as part of Hello Tamna (a phone-in program) and got appreciation from the listeners..... They run the stations from the fund of Integrated Community Development Organization (located at Uchiwa, Leirak Achouba) and hope to get grant from the authority concerned in future. The broadcasted programs were mainly focused on rural development. Further he suggests that Tamna radio can be replicated to other places of Manipur.... will be helpful in catering the needs of particular community as there are still many places where AIR, Imphal cannot reach."

Manipur, however small it is, is the land of multi-linguistic, multi-religions and multi-cultural with 34 recognized scheduled tribes and 7 recognized scheduled castes apart from Meiteis, Meitei pangals. So, it would be impossible for National Radio Service like All India Radio to reflect and present the need of all the ethnic groups in such a diversified region, Manipur. In addition, different ethnic groups have separate dialects and cultures. So, community radio which is based on community dialect and focused on community issues would have great advantages in such condition.

In Manipur, radio is the most used medium of information. Particularly, they are the eyes and ears of ordinary people, and therefore, it may be used as effective tools for promoting public health awareness in state. Radio is of vital importance in both rural and urban people of the state. It is the main information provider in interior and remote areas in which radio can be easily accessed to get any information.

SUGGESTIONS

Radio is temporary. Stories are often broadcasted in air only once, so if you find the information confused or miss a point, it is not easy to get clarification. Radio news or reports need to write clear and simple words. Radio presenters and reporters should take a great care while speaking and should speak distinctly.

Normally, people are much familiar with some varieties of news, such as crime and violence, politics, entertainment, etc. In health news, they try to have only a glance at the news on health and hygiene. Here lies the importance of using certain type of techniques to make the readers to acquaint with the health information. In true sense, health awareness will make people well aware of the benefits of health information and make him understand to follow some of the given ideas or information.

In giving health messages through radio, it requires a good convincing communication medium. Lack of appropriate information on health care among public is also one factor that delays achieving the goal of public health care. Thus, it is very much necessary to study the culture, belief, literacy and life style of a specified area in extending health messages. Health information based on the facts that are concluded after careful study of everyday lives of their target groups and environment are undoubtedly quite successful.

Manipur has its distinct culture and traditions. Giving information in all aspects of news coverage needs judicious desks. On account of having different dialects of various communities, the system and medium of news distribution require a systematic arrangement in making news. In health awareness campaign too, the news-value of the information with practical solutions within the reach of the common people should be kept in mind before broadcasting. Coming to the basic, it can conclude that the health awareness being given to the readers needs a close eye at the lifestyle of the target group(s).

Above all, Manipur is a land of diversified cultures and dialects. The medium of information or the language used in community radio should be local dialect of the concerned community. Even though, Meiteilon/Manipuri is the primary

language as a lingua franca and English is the most common in written among tribal communities.

In addition, to popularize health news just like social news, political news, sport news, every community radio houses should have a strong obligation to include health section, as a primary component considering the backwardness in health sector. The benefits of the health information provided by the radio may have on the first sight little impact but regular and frequent input of health information will ultimately serve as a Good Samaritan in achieving success in delivering health message to masses. In other words, it is to mention that regular supply of health news in community radio will surely make people accustomed to the benefits of health awareness.

Regarding the content of the health information in broadcast, the words or terms used in the given information also attract careful edit. Technical jargon or scientific and medical terms should be avoided as far as possible. Simplified language in a lucid manner will work among the laymen. Hence, community radio will have a greater role in spreading health awareness in Manipur. The extensive support contributed by community radio in this sector is of no bounds. However, the quality of information needs to be maintained to the extent that people should be excited in awaiting the next episode. Here come the necessities of a skilled workforce in the community radio who firmly stand for advocacy of health awareness among the public.

CONCLUSION

The present study presents deep insight into understanding the significant need of community radio to promote health awareness among people who are particularly residing remote region where the accessibility of health care infrastructure and health care services is limited. In Manipur, many people have lost their valuable lives due to lack of proper health care services and timely interventions. To make people aware of health care, community radio can play a crucial role in reaching health awareness to the people. Unfortunately, in Manipur, there is not a single community radio station functioning properly as yet. All India Radio, Imphal, broadcast some of the communities programs. But it is very limited and programs are specific due to time constraint. In short, it is also not sufficient considering the present need.

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